

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O 051735Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3664

S E C R E T LISBON 4443

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: OTELO AND NEW GOVERNMENT

1. RELIABLE EMBASSY SOURCE HAS DESCRIBED WHAT HAPPENED AT AUGUST 4 MEETING OF LISBON MILITARY REGION COMMANDERS AND AFM OFFICERS AT WHICH PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES WAS GIVEN VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN FORMING NEW GOVERNMENT.

2. FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM CUBA, GENERAL OTELO SARAIVA DE CARVALHO WAS ASKED TO TAKE OVER THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP. OTELO DECIDED NOT TO. THIS COMPLICATED THE SITUATION BECAUSE SEVERAL PROSPECTIVE MINISTERS REFUSED TO SERVE WITH ANYONE BUT OTELO. IT ALSO COMPLICATED THE TRIUMVIRATE ARRANGEMENT. AT THIS POINT, THE PM SAID THAT BEST THING WOULD BE FOR COPCON TO TAKE OVER THE GOVERNMENT. (THIS IS THE INFORMATION WHICH LEAKED, AND PROBABLY PROVIDED THE BASIS FOR AUTHORITATIVE STORIES ON AUGUST 4 THAT GONCALVES WAS OUT AS PRIME MINISTER.) OTELO THEN SUGGESTED A GOVERNMENT WITH ONLY FOUR OR FIVE MINISTERS, WITH HIMSELF AS PRIME MINISTER WITH FULL POWERS OR PRESIDENT. HOWEVER, OPERATION COPCON COMMANDERS DECIDED TO SUPPORT GONCALVES AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITY TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT.

3. COMMENT: IT APPEARS FROM THIS REPORT THAT OTELO WAS OUT-MANEUVURED BY GONCALVES, WHO CAN BE EXCEEDINGLY PERSUASIVE IN SUCH MEETINGS. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD THAT OTELO HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT RELUCTANT TO TAKE OVER POLITICAL CONTROL, PREFERRING FOR NOW TO CONTINUE AS COPCON. THUS, OTELO WAS PROBABLY NOT PARTICULARLY

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KEEN TO TAKE OVER THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP AT THIS TIME -- DESPITE

HIS LIKELY DESIRE TO OUST GONCALVES -- AND DID NOT MAKE A HARD
FIGHT FOR THE JOB. IN ANY CASE, THESE EVENTS CONFIRM THE
IMPRESSIVE WEIGHT OF OTELO ON THE POLITICAL SCENE, ALTHOUGH THE
EVENTS DESCRIBED ABOVE AND THE COMMANDO AFFAIR (LISBON 4431)
HAVE PROBABLY COST HIM A FEW POINTS. MEANWHILE THE MEDIA PRESS
REPORTS THAT GONCALVES EXPECTS TO ANNOUNCE HIS GOVERNMENT
"SHORTLY."
CARLUCCI

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NNN

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